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ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of "The Snow Queen," adapted from the story by Hans Christian Andersen by Sandra Deer. The guide, called a "Cuesheet," contains seven sheets for use in class, addressing: (1) What Happens in "The Snow Queen?" (offering a story synopsis and a pre-performance activity); (2) Play Map (a time line of important events and characters in the play); (3) Adaptations: How Print Becomes Performance (looking at how a written story must be adapted for the theatre, and offering lines from the play to listen for and some class activities); (4) Objects: How the Props Help the Performance (describing the use of props in plays and props in "The Snow Queen"); (5) Plays: Pretending and Participating (looking at theatre conventions and problems to be solved when putting on plays); (6) The Audience: Great Pretenders (discussing the audience's important role in a theatre performance); and (7) Hans Christian Andersen (offering biographical information about this famous author of fairytales). Resources for further exploration are listed. (SR)

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"The Snow Queen": Adapted from the Story by Hans Christian Andersen by Sandra Deer. Cue Sheet for Students.

by Suzanne Pratt

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CUESHEET for Students

The Snow Queen

Adapted from the story by Hans Christian Andersen by Sandra Deer

WELCOME TO CUESHEET, one of a series of performance guides published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed to be used before and after attending a performance of *The Snow Queen*.

What's in Cuesheet?

What happens in *The Snow Queen?* page 2

Play Map, page 3

Adaptations: How print becomes performance, page 4

Objects: How props help the performance, page 5

Plays: Pretending and Participating, pages 6

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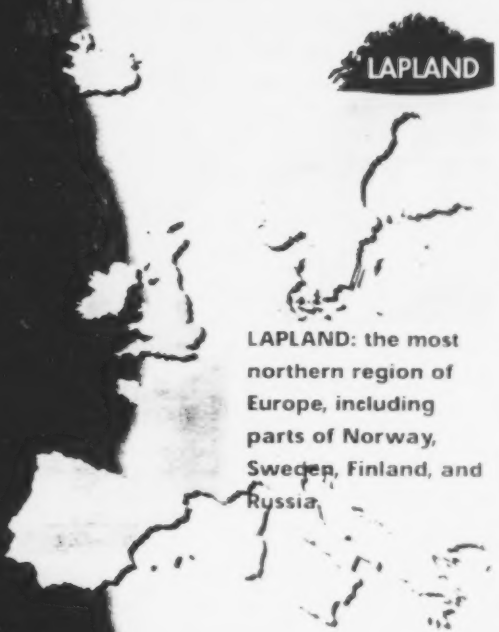
What happens in The Snow Queen?



LAPLAND: the most northern region of Europe, including parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

Young Kai and his neighbor, Gerda, play together summer and winter. While Gerda practices her flute, Kai becomes a whiz at multiplication tables and geography. As they bake cookies, Gerda's grandmother tells them the story of the Snow Queen and her ice palace north of Lapland.

One day, something sharp pierces Kai's eye and heart. He thinks it is a cinder. He immediately becomes nasty and mean. Later, Kai finds his toboggan (sled) attached to the sled of a mysterious driver, who takes him away.

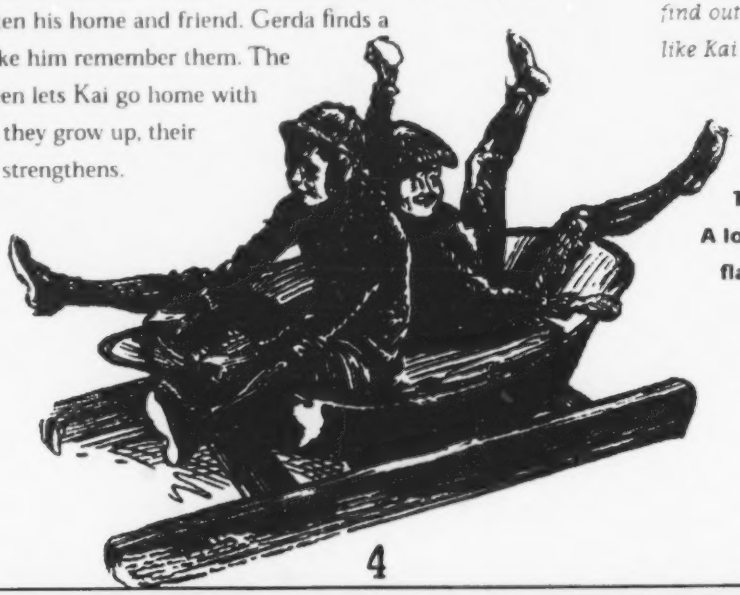
When Gerda discovers that Kai has disappeared, she sets out to find him. On her journey, she has many adventures. First, an Old Woman feeds her cherries and combs her hair with a golden comb. Gerda thinks about stopping her search. Then she dreams of her friend, and continues. Soon, Gerda is kidnapped by the Robber Girl and her mother. Gerda thinks she is in danger, but the Robber Girl becomes her friend and helps her look for Kai.

Kai has been living in the Snow Queen's palace. He has become spoiled and selfish. An old Fisher Woman explains to Gerda that Kai's eye and heart were pierced by a splinter of an evil mirror. Flowers, animals, a reindeer, and the Fisher Woman lead Gerda to the palace. Kai has forgotten his home and friend. Gerda finds a way to make him remember them. The Snow Queen lets Kai go home with Gerda. As they grow up, their friendship strengthens.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

In the play, the Snow Queen tells Kai, "Take this circle and these seven sticks. See what you can make with them. They will tell you when it is time for you to go home."

Find seven pencils and a paper plate (or some other circular object). Try to predict how Kai arranges seven sticks and a circle so that he knows it is time to leave. Share your arrangements with your classmates. During the performance, find out if you think like Kai does.



TOBOGGAN: A long, narrow, flat-bottomed sled.

CINDER: A particle of burned material.

Play Map

BEGIN
Gerda and Kai bake cookies with Grandmother.
Grandmother
Kai's eye and heart are pierced. He becomes nasty.
Kai
The Snow Queen takes Kai away to her palace.
Gerda
Gerda looks for Kai.
An Old Lady combs Gerda's hair and offers her cherries and gifts.
The Snow Queen
Gerda is guided to the Snow Queen's palace.
Kai is spoiled by the Snow Queen.
Robber Girl
Gerda meets the Robber Girl.
The Old Fisher Woman teaches Gerda about the evil mirror.
Robber Mother
Reindeer
Gerda rides a reindeer to the palace.
Gerda finds Kai.
Kai returns home with Gerda.
SNOW QUEEN
COSTUM
SIGNATURE

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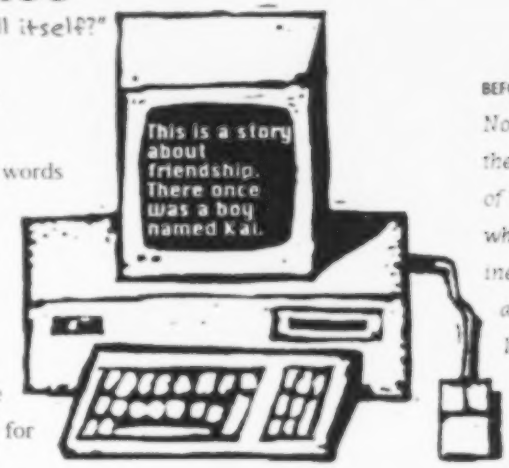
Adaptations: How Print Becomes Performance

How does the story "tell itself?"

Adapting means changing.



Changing a story of printed words into a story told through actions and characters' dialogue (lines performers speak) usually requires changes in the story. Playwrights may make these changes to prepare the story for the stage:

1) Characters and events may be combined, simplified, or eliminated.
2) Characters and events may be added.
3) Settings may be simplified to avoid complicated scene changes.

Lines to Listen For:

Here are some lines the playwright wrote when adapting the story *The Snow Queen* for the stage:

GRANDMOTHER

"Nature has her secrets. She's smarter than all of us."

What objects or events in nature make you stop and wonder?

NARRATOR

"[Kai and Gerda] were such good friends, they almost never got angry or bored with each other."

What makes you friends with someone? Who is your oldest friend? Why have you stayed friends?

FISHERWOMAN

"You got folks all over the countryside helping you... 'cause you're dedicated. It's hard to say no to true dedication."

Dedication means promising yourself to achieve your goal. What are you dedicated to? What makes you want to help someone else? When have you wanted to help someone?

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

Now that you know the plot (the story) of The Snow Queen, what do you imagine the characters and settings look like?

Draw what you think your favorite character might look like.

Find a copy of the story of The Snow Queen in your school or public library. Share it with your friends or family.

How do the illustrations (pictures in the book) compare to how you see the characters and settings in your mind?

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

Compare the play with the book. Make a list of characters, events, and locations which were changed, combined, added, simplified, or eliminated from the story.

Do you think these changes help or hurt the story? Why?

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Objects: How Props Help the Performance

Objects often give readers or viewers very strong feelings. (Compare the feeling of receiving a balloon or an ice cream cone to the feeling of receiving a spoonful of medicine or a needle in the doctor's office!)

In the theater, small objects that actors handle are called hand props. Large items, like pieces of furniture, are called stage props.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

Label each prop in the list on the right as a hand prop (H), a stage prop (S), or a (?) if you're not sure. Imagine what the props will look like.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

Check the labels you put on your props list. Do you need to change any labels?

Did these props look different from the way you imagined?

The Snow Queen PROP LIST

____ A splinter of glass/ an evil mirror
____ A toboggan (a small sled)
____ A boat that carries Gerda on her journey
____ A pair of red shoes
____ A golden comb
____ A muff
____ A symphony of flowers (Gladiolus; Sweet Peas; Gardenias; Nasturtiums; Tulips; Petunias; Tiger Lilies; Narcissus; Sunflowers)
____ A bush with big red berries
____ A rose frozen in an icicle
____ A fish
____ Seven sticks and a circle

MUFF: a roll of fur and quilted cloth used by ladies to warm their hands while outdoors; considered very feminine and fashionable.

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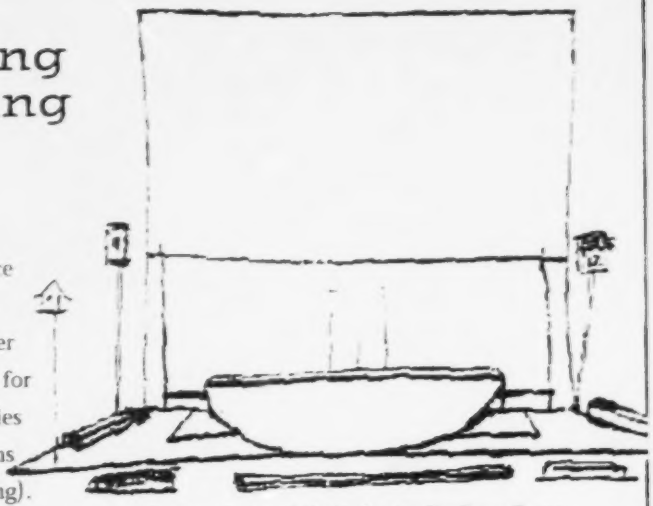
Plays: Pretending and Participating

Theater Conventions

A basic understanding between audience and performer is the agreement to "suspend disbelief"—to pretend together that the action is real and is happening for the first time. This agreement often relies on the acceptance of theater conventions (practices accepted as part of playmaking).

These theater conventions are found in *The Snow Queen:*

- Narrators talk to the audience.
- A character's dream is acted out by the dreamer and other characters.
- Some performers play many different characters.
- Some performers play animals, flowers, trees, rivers, and other natural objects that move, speak, and think like humans.
- Settings are suggested by use of simple props and furniture.
- Lighting changes (including color changes) indicate changes in setting.
- Changes in characters' ages are suggested by simple changes in hair and costumes.



Suzanne Jackson's Set Design for *The Snow Queen*

Problems To Solve

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

People who put plays together (playwrights, directors, actors, and designers) have to be creative problem-solvers. The original story of The Snow Queen involves characters and actions that are magical. Below are some problems that had to be solved for this production of The Snow Queen. How would you solve them? Remember that you must solve the problems by using music, lights (different colors are possible), sound effects, voices, costumes, scenery, furniture, and objects (props). Be careful. Your creative solutions must work on the stage.

PROBLEM 1: Kai's eye and heart are pierced by slivers of broken glass from an enchanted evil mirror. How can this be shown without hurting the actor playing Kai?

PROBLEM 2: The Snow Queen's white sled flies through the air with Kai and his toboggan. How can you show a flying sled?

PROBLEM 3: At the beginning of her journey, Gerda rides in a boat and tosses her red shoes in the water. How can you show a river without real water?

PROBLEM 4: Gerda conducts a symphony of flowers. How can flowers make music?

PROBLEM 5: Some performers play natural objects or animals. Examples: The Last Rose of Summer; Bae, the reindeer; and the Lonesome Pine. How can these non-human characters be played by human actors? Are there other ways to present these characters?

PROBLEM 6: At the end of the play, Gerda and Kai grow up right on stage. How can live actors show this process?

The Audience: "Great Pretenders"

When you go to the theater, **you are the audience.** The audience is an important part of the performance. You help the performers by pretending and participating with them.

Before the performance: An **usher** will meet your class at the entrance to the theater and guide you to your seats. **Bathrooms** are located outside the theater. It is a good idea to use them before the performance, since everyone will want to go later. If you must go to the bathroom during the performance, be sure that you leave and return quietly. When the performance is about to begin, the lights in the theater (house lights) will dim and go out. Be sure you are ready to become silent when this happens.

During the performance: Help build the magic of theater with your imagination and cooperation. Attending a play is different from watching TV or going to the movies. The performers are in the same room as you are. They need you to **watch** and **listen** quietly. Talking to friends disturbs the performers and other members of the audience. Your job is to **pretend** along with the performers. They like it when you **laugh** when something is funny. They also like to hear you **clap** at the end of a performance when they bow. **After the bows,** the audience **stays seated** until the house lights come on. Follow the usher's directions for leaving the theater.

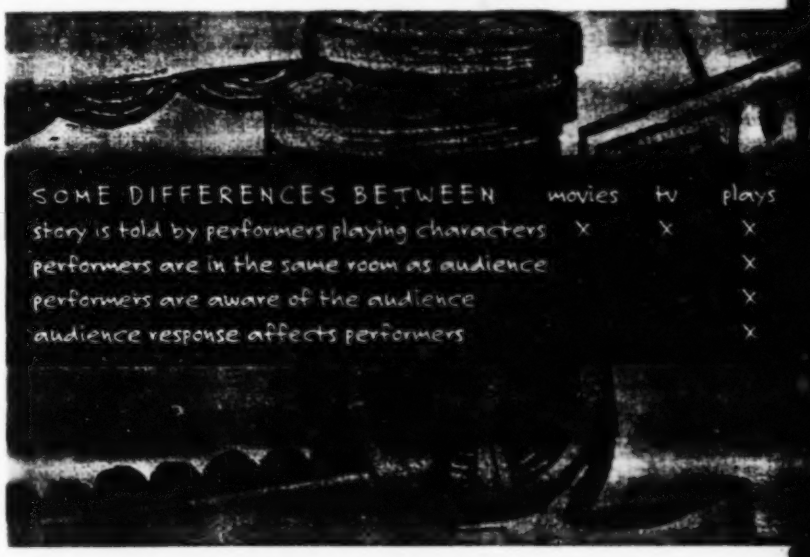
After the performance: Actors, dancers, and musicians like to hear from their audiences. **Write** and let them know your thoughts. Write to *Cuesheet/The Snow Queen,* The Kennedy Center Education Department, Washington, D.C. 20566.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

The original story and the play are titled The Snow Queen. Is this the best title for this story? Should it be called Gerda and Kai, since they are the main characters? Make a list of titles that would fit this story. Remember that sometimes an important object can suggest a title. Share your list of titles with your class.

Design a poster for this play. Illustrate some of the characters, a moment in the action, or one of the objects in the play.

The setting for many stories is a castle or palace (Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast). Imagine that the Snow Queen asked you to design a new palace for her. Draw your design.


SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN movies tv plays
story is told by performers playing characters x x x
performers are in the same room as audience x
performers are aware of the audience x
audience response affects performers x

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Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) of Denmark made up many stories, including the original version of *The Snow Queen*. He had some of his strongest feelings when he was young. Read what he wrote below. Have you had some of these same feelings?

1816 Age 11: My father has died. The best gift my father gave me was the theater he made for me, but now I'm tired of my puppets. I hate being poor. I want to leave this small town and become famous.

Hans Christian Andersen on his fairy tales: "I would willingly have discontinued writing them, but they forced themselves from me." (Eva La Gallienne)

1819 Age 14: I'm running away to Denmark's largest city, Copenhagen. I'll be a star in Copenhagen. I have no money, no work, no friends. I want to be a singer! I want to be a dancer! I want to be an actor!

1820 Age 15: Success! I've been hired to perform at the Royal Theater of Copenhagen!

1821 Age 16: Another rejection! I lost my job. My voice is changing.

1822 Age 17: More rejection. Every play I've written has been rejected. Is it because I can't spell?

1828 Age 22: I've become a published author!

1835 Age 30: I am really famous now. My very first novel is being read all over Europe, but I make up fairy tales in my head. I think I'll begin to publish them as well.

1875 Age 70: As I look back on my life, I'm surprised that my fairy tales seem to be my most popular works. The best known are *The Princess and the Pea, The Emperor's New Clothes, The Ugly Duckling, The Little Mermaid, The Nightingale,* and *The Snow Queen.* (No one must ever know that the Ugly Duckling was really me.)

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

You may want to read: The Snow Queen, retold by Amy Ehrlich.

You may want to see: The Snow Queen. Video. Fairie Tale Theater.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

The Kiss of the Snow Queen: Hans Christian Andersen and Man's Redemption by Woman by Wolfgang Lederer.

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The Snow Queen
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